

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 1699 without my signature.

This bill would require Caltrans to contract out a study of the safety of push-pull rail operations. Recently, the Federal Railroad Administration completed a comprehensive study of this very subject, making this bill largely unnecessary. The federal study analyzed data from over 500 passenger rail collisions over a ten-year period. The study included computer simulations of several accidents, including the tragic accident in Glendale last year that resulted in this bill. The federal study concluded that, while some measures can and should be taken to minimize danger to rail passengers, including technological improvements to avoid accidents and better emergency response, the elimination of push-pull operation is neither necessary nor warranted.

Given the comprehensive nature of the federal report, we should use our state resources to build upon, not duplicate, that study. To that end, I am signing legislation this year, AB 158, which creates a new task force that will, among other tasks, identify deficiencies for responding to railroad emergencies.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger